

Land Management

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages land along the first 30 miles of the corridor and the National Park Service (NPS) manages land along the remaining 60 miles. Each agency manages its lands according to specific legislative direction and management guidelines.

Purposes of Denali National Park and Preserve

The purposes of Denali National Park and Preserve have evolved from the time Congress established the original Mount McKinley National Park to present. The 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) expanded the original national park, added national preserve lands, and designated most of the original Mount McKinley National Park as wilderness.

Mount McKinley National Park

In 1917, Congress established Mount McKinley National Park as a “game refuge” to “set apart as a public park for the benefit and enjoyment of the people . . . for recreation purposes by the public and for the preservation of animals, birds, and fish and for the preservation of the natural curiosities and scenic beauties thereof . . .” (39 Statute 938).

Denali National Monument

Separate but adjacent to Mount McKinley National Park, Denali National Monument was established by Presidential Proclamation on December 1, 1978. This and other Alaska proclamations temporarily preserved areas during the legislative process to pass the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act.

Denali National Park and Preserve

In 1980, Congress passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), which combined Mount McKinley National Park and Denali National Monument and renamed them as Denali National Park and Preserve. Section 101 of ANILCA describes the broad purposes of the new conservation system units throughout Alaska, including enlarged national parks and preserves, such as Denali. These include the following:

- Preserve lands and waters for the benefit, use, education, and inspiration of present and future generations.
- Preserve unrivaled scenic and geologic values associated with natural landscapes.
- Maintain sound populations of, and habitat for, wildlife species.
- Preserve extensive, unaltered ecosystems in their natural state.
- Protect resources related to subsistence needs.
- Protect historic and archeological sites.
- Preserve wilderness resource values and related recreational opportunities, such as hiking, canoeing, fishing, and sport hunting.
- Maintain opportunities for scientific research in undisturbed ecosystems.
- Provide the opportunity for rural residents to engage in a subsistence way of life.

Section 202 states that the park additions and preserve are to be managed for the following additional purposes:

- To protect and interpret the entire mountain massif and the additional scenic mountain peaks and formations.
- To protect habitat for, and populations of, fish and wildlife including, but not limited to, brown/grizzly bears, moose, caribou, Dall sheep, wolves, swans, and other waterfowl.
- To provide continued opportunities, including reasonable access, for mountain climbing, mountaineering, and other wilderness recreation activities.

Legislative Intent

Senate Report #96-413 on ANILCA (page 166) referenced the north park additions:

The prime resource for which the north addition is established is the critical range necessary to support populations of moose, wolf, and caribou as part of an integral ecosystem. Public enjoyment of these outstanding wildlife values would thus continue to be assured.

General Management Plan and Wilderness Suitability Review

The 1986 General Management Plan recommended against the construction of a new north access route. The Wilderness Suitability Review, completed in conjunction with the General Management Plan, identified the north park additions (which include the national park lands within the study area of the Visitor Facilities Study) as suitable for wilderness designation. According to *Management Policies 2001*, the National Park Service will take no action to diminish the suitability of an area until the legislative process by Congress has been completed.

Refer to appendix B for NPS policies pertaining to visitor facilities and transportation.

Purposes of State Land within the Study Area

When Alaska became a state in 1959, it was granted more than 100 million acres of land. At statehood, the Alaska Legislature charged the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) with the complex job of managing the state-owned lands for the “maximum public benefit.” DNR’s goal is to contribute to Alaska’s economic health and quality of life by protecting and maintaining the state’s resources, and encouraging wise development of these resources by making them available for public use.

There is a wide range of possibilities for how state land could be used; however, not all desired uses of state lands can occur compatibly in the same place at the same time. Wherever possible, DNR establishes guidelines that allow for multiple use. Through resource planning, DNR works with the public to determine how the land can be used for the maximum public benefit. When DNR developed the Tanana Basin Area Plan (TBAP) in 1991, which applies to state land within the study area, the goal of the planning process was to ensure that all resources were considered and evaluated.

Within the study area, the land in State ownership (land not privately owned) essentially extends from the George Parks Highway to the Sushana River. All of the state land (including the beds of navigable waters and public water bodies) in the corridor west of the Panguingue Creek subdivision is managed by DNR and is included in Subregion 4E in TBAP. The plan directs that the state lands in that unit be retained in public ownership with public recreation and wildlife habitat as the primary surface uses. Land disposals are prohibited in this subunit, but material sales, leases, and permits that are not specifically prohibited may be allowed. The state lands between the subdivision and the George Parks Highway are similarly designated, although a large, long-term grazing lease covers much of this land. The Panguingue Creek subdivision was designated as settlement in the 1991 TBAP and has since been conveyed to the Denali Borough and private landowners. "Open to Entry" landholders are dispersed throughout the area, including land near Eight Mile Lake. Most of the state land from the George Parks Highway to the Eight Mile Lake area has been selected by the Denali Borough as part of its 50,000-acre entitlement. Most of the land south of Dry Creek is in private ownership.

Tanana Basin Area Plan

The 1991 *Tanana Basin Area Plan* identifies the following management intent for state land along the Stampede Trail, Management Unit 4E:

General. State land in this unit is to be retained in public ownership for multiple use management. The emphasis is on managing recreation and maintaining fish and wildlife habitat. All state land in this unit is open to mineral entry.

Fish and Wildlife. Fish and wildlife habitat is designated a primary use in subunit 4E1 (area west of Panguingue Creek subdivision). The western half of this subunit is extremely high value habitat as a calving and winter range for the McKinley caribou herd. The remaining area is prime-rated habitat for caribou, moose, grizzly bear, and furbearers. Other important activities are big game hunting, trapping, and wildlife viewing.

Minerals. The area between Dry Creek and the Teklanika River has potential for coal bearing formations. Proximity to Denali National Park may inhibit mineral development; however, mineral entry, coal prospecting, and leasing will be allowed.

Recreation. Recreation is designated a primary use in this unit. Important recreation sites include Eight Mile Lake and Stampede Road Historic Trail. Activities include backpacking, camping, and hunting.

At the time of this writing, DNR has begun the revision process for the Tanana Basin Area Plan.